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ABSTRACT

American Indian controlled community colleges emerged on the educational scene in the late 1960's and early 1970's. The first such college was created in 1968 and since this time ten additional colleges have been established with governing boards whose total membership is American Indian. The philosophy of the colleges emphasizes the interweaving of tribally distinctive cultural elements into the postsecondary process and a pragmatic approach to higher education which focuses on providing and improving individual competencies and skills which are relevant to the individual and to the community. Their purposes are to address tribal needs and concerns; to perpetuate tribal heritage, history, and culture; to prepare students for transfer to four-year colleges; and to provide occupational, adult, and continuing education. The colleges have several common features including the following: (1) official tribal charters form the basis for their establishment; (2) due to accreditation and other requirements the majority are not, in fact, controlled by American Indians; (3) the majority were established without prior needs assessment or long-range planning; (4) teaching and administrative personnel are overwhelmingly American Indian; (5) the students tend to be older, and part-time enrollment exceeds full-time; (6) problems exist in relation to adequacy of facilities, student services, and transportation; and (7) an open-door admissions policy is adopted, and a non-traditional approach to education is employed. (HB)

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The American Indian Controlled Community College Movement*

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*This article is based on information gathered through on-site interviews with the executive heads of nine of the eleven Indian controlled community colleges identified by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and by examining status study reports, Title III proposals, catalogs, handbooks, newsletters, newspapers, and general information brochures provided by the colleges.

American Indian controlled community colleges emerged on the educational scene during the late 1960's and early 1970's. Much of the impetus behind their evolution grew out of the need for community-orientated education, the thrust of self-determination, and an awareness among native American leaders that existing avenues of higher education opportunities had not been sufficiently accessible to or appropriate for the majority of the Indian people on the reservation, and therefore were not fully effective in terms of local impact. These conditions, coupled with the fact that the decade of the 1960's was a period of intense examination of American values and institutions, prompted tribal leaders across the country to actively explore the concept of locally based higher education centers.

As Indian educators and political leaders began to understand the complexities of administration, funding, and budgeting, the mood for Indian controlled higher education gained momentum. The most significant example of this new mood and awareness was the establishment of the first Indian controlled and directed college in the country, Navajo Community College of Arizona. The College was founded July 1, 1968 and classes began January 20, 1969.[1] Following the Navajo example, ten additional colleges have now been established with governing boards whose total membership is American Indian.

PHILOSOPHY AND PURPOSE

The American Indian controlled community college movement rests on certain unique characteristics. First, the interweaving of tribally distinctive cultural elements into the post-secondary process is emphasized.

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[1]Margaret C. Szasz. Education and the American Indian.(Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1977), p. 176.

Second, the general view within the Indian college movement is that community based higher education must be pragmatic. It must focus on providing and improving individual competencies and skills that are relevant not only to the individual, but to the community as well.

Since the brief histories of each of the colleges virtually parallel each other, and since the institutions were founded on a commonality of needs, it is not surprising that their individual statements of philosophy, when interpreted and evaluated, are almost identical. "Self-determination", "Indian control", "addressing community needs", "relevant education", "cultural reinforcement", and "local control" are concepts which undergird Indian controlled higher education. One college, while incorporating all of the concepts previously mentioned, carried its philosophy one step further by asserting, "Quality higher education for Indian people can best flourish when provided by, for, and of Indian people."

The purposes served by the colleges may be grouped under five headings as follows: 1. address tribal needs and concerns, 2. preparation for transfer to four-year college, 3. perpetuation of tribal heritage, history, and culture, 4. occupational education, and 5. adult and continuing education.

COMMON FEATURES

The Indian college communities are, in general, rural and isolated from the mainstream of American life geographically, economically, socially, and culturally. The concept of "community", from an Indian perspective, is far more encompassing than the typical notions of "community"held by most Americans. The community is the basis for individual self-awareness among American Indians, and identity is based on partici-

pation in and knowlege of traditional life of the community as embodied by the tribe.[2]

When the term "community college" is related to general American higher education, the reference is usually to an institution which is tied into local industry, business, and government, and which has placed higher education within the financial and commuting reach of thousands of citizens. On the other hand, the American Indian controlled community colleges are tied into undeveloped or limited local industry or business, and to a form of government that is different from the city, county, and state forms common to most Americans. Because of the endemic poverty environment, there is a pressing need for skill and resource development in the communities served by the colleges.

American Indian controlled community colleges have several common features:

1. Official tribal charters form the legal basis for the establishment of the colleges.
2. In terms of actual function, the pronounced majority of them are not, in fact, controlled by American Indians. Because of official ties with sponsoring, accredited colleges which are far more paternalistic than bi-lateral, most of the Indian colleges are not in position to exercise full control over activities and functions.
3. Though the colleges evolved in response to definite felt needs on the part of tribal leaders, educators, and other interested community people, the majority of them were

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[2]Richard Nichols. "History, Problems, and Issues of American Indian Controlled Community Colleges". (Paper submitted to Human Resources Team, President's Reorganization Project, Washington, 1977), p. 3.

established without any prior structured needs assessment or long range plans of development.

4. With one exception, the colleges were all established in the 1970's.
5. Administrative and instructional personnel are overwhelmingly American Indian.
6. Student housing facilities and competitive athletic programs are generally unavailable.
7. The students are older than their typical counterparts in the dominant society, and part-time enrollment is greater than full-time enrollment.
8. The most pressing problems faced by the colleges are in the areas of personnel, facilities, student services, financial resources, and regional accreditation.
9. The curriculums reflect cultural contributions and philosophies as well as academic requirements.
10. Transportation difficulties caused by distances, poor roads, lack of public and private transportation systems, and severe weather conditions are sources of continuing concern.
11. The colleges employ the open-door admission policy.
12. In a break from traditional approaches in higher education, instructional services are delivered under a dispersed or outreach concept invo'ving decentralized modes of operation.
13. All of the colleges are members of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium.

AMERICAN INDIAN CONTROLLED COMMUNITY COLLEGES[3]

College	Location	Year Established
American Indian Satellite Community College	Winnebago, Nebraska	1973
Cheyenne River Community College	Eagle Butte, South Dakota	1973
Fort Berthold Community College	New Town, North Dakota	1973
Hehaka Sapa Community College	Davis, California	1971
Little Hoop Community College	Fort Totten, North Dakota	1974
Oglala Sioux Community College	Pine Rigde, South Dakota	1971
Navajo Community College	Tsaile, Arizona	1968
Sinte Gleska Community College	Rosebud, South Dakota	1970
Sisseton-Wahpeton Community Col.	Sisseton, South Dakota	1973
Standing Rock Community College	Fort Yates, North Dakota	1973
Turtle Mountain Collumity College	Belcourt, North Dakota	1973

[3]Bureau of Indian Affairs, Department of the Interior. (Fall, 1978 listing).

The American Indian controlled community colleges represent a new and interesting experiment and will very likely become more closely identified with higher education in the United States in the years ahead. Unfortunately, very little is known about them outside the Indian communities, and researchers have almost totally ignored them.

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